

Description

The present invention relates to subscriber telephone apparatus and, more particularly, to a speech circuit as defined in the preamble to Claim 1.

As is known, the speech circuit of a telephone has the general function of connecting to a two-wire telephone line both the generator of local signals to be sent on the line and the receiver of signals coming from the line. In particular, it has to perform two basic functions: matching the line impedance and cancelling out the side tone, that is, the effect by which the person speaking on the telephone hears his own voice in the earpiece.

A very widespread speech circuit is that which uses a Wheatstone bridge. As well as the side tone, it can also effectively attenuate the noise of the transmission circuits of the local signal generator and that of most of the circuits involved. A speech circuit of this type which is suitable for production as an integrated circuit is described, for example, in an article entitled "A programmable speech circuit suitable for telephone transducers" published in the IEEE Journal of Solid-State Circuits, Vol. SC-17, No. 6, December 1982, pages 1149-1157.

In order to reduce as far as possible the number of electrical components outside the integrated circuit, and thus to reduce the overall size of the telephone apparatus, speech circuits have been developed in which the two functions described above are carried out by methods other than that on which the bridge circuit is based. For example, the circuit described in European patent application EP 0579891 filed by the Applicant on 22.07.92 achieves impedance matching by synthesizing a complex impedance as the termination impedance of the speech circuit by means of a positive feedback loop comprising a single resistor and attenuates the side tone by means of a subtracter which subtracts a signal derived directly from the transmission generator from the signal coming from the line so as to provide the receiver with a signal which is not affected by the transmitted signal.

It has been found that the attenuation of the side tone thus achieved is satisfactory but requires the noise generated by the components of the feedback loop and of the transmission circuits to be low. This requirement is difficult to satisfy particularly if, amongst these components, there are filters formed by the so-called switched capacitor technique, as is the case when the number of components outside the integrated circuit is to be reduced to a minimum. In fact, in order to keep the noise of these filters low enough, the overall capacitance of the capacitors used has to be quite high; however, this involves the use of a correspondingly large area of the "chip" on which the integrated circuit is formed.

The object of the present invention is to provide a speech circuit which uses a positive feedback loop such as that described above in order to synthesize a complex termination impedance, but which achieves cancel-

lation or at least effective attenuation of the side tone and which is unaffected by the noise produced in the feedback loop and in the transmission circuits and can therefore be formed in a small area in the integrated circuit.

This object is achieved, according to the invention, by the provision of the speech circuit defined and characterized in general in the first of the claims which follow the present description.

The invention will be understood better from the following detailed description of an embodiment thereof which is given by way of example and is therefore in no way limiting, and which relates to the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram showing the speech circuit described in the European patent application indicated above,

Figure 2 is a block diagram showing a speech circuit according to the invention, and

Figure 3 shows a variant of the circuit of Figure 2.

The known circuit shown in Figure 1 has two terminals, indicated L- and L+ for connection to a telephone line, represented by its impedance Z_{lin} , and comprises an integrated circuit 10 and some external components, of which a resistor 11, a microphone 12 and a receiver unit 13 are shown.

In the drawing, one of the line terminals (L-) is connected to a fixed potential, indicated by the earth symbol, but it will be evident to the person skilled in the art of telecommunications that this is only a device to simplify the description since, in practice, the telephone signal is a differential signal, that is, it causes a variation of the potentials of both of the wires of the line.

The integrated circuit 10 comprises a microphone-signal amplifier and a received-signal amplifier, indicated 14 and 15, respectively, which, together with the microphone 12 and the receiver unit 13, constitute the transmission generator and the receiver of the telephone apparatus, respectively. It also comprises a circuit for coupling the generator and the receiver to the line.

This coupling circuit comprises a block 16 which contains a capacitive coupler with a transfer function K_p , which is connected between the line terminals L+ and L-, and outputs a signal (V_a) correlated to the signal (V_{lin}) present between the line terminals, and which therefore has the function of detecting the line signal.

The coupling circuit also comprises an adder 17 with two inputs, of which one is connected to the output of the capacitive coupler 16 by means of a filter 18 with a transfer function H and the other is connected to the output of the transmission amplifier 14 by means of a second filter 19 with a transfer function H_t . The adder 17 has a transfer function K for the input connected to the filter 18 and, together with the filter 18, thus constitutes a first processing and filtering circuit unit with a transfer function H.K, and a transfer function K_t for the input

which is connected to the filter 19 so as to constitute, together with the filter 19, a second processing and filtering circuit unit with a transfer function $H_t.K_t$. The output of the adder 17 is connected to the line terminal L+ by means of the resistor 11. The adder 17 has a very low output impedance so that the resistor 11 can be considered to be connected directly between the line terminals and the current flowing through it is thus substantially equal to the line current. It can be shown that, in order to have a flat gain when the termination impedance synthesized is equal to the line impedance Z_{lin} , the transfer function between the input (V_b) of the filter 19 and the output (V_c) of the adder 17 is equal to $2R_{dc}/Z_{lin}$.

The output of the capacitive coupler 16 and the output of the transmission amplifier 14 are connected to the inputs of a subtracter 20, the output of which is connected to the input of the receiver amplifier 14. The subtracter 20 is formed so as to multiply the signal coming from the coupler 16 by $1/K_p$.

In order to be integrated easily, the filter 18 is preferably formed by the switched capacitor technique and is formed in a manner such that its transfer function H is programmable in dependence on the impedance of the line to which the telephone apparatus is to be connected.

The block 16 with the function of a capacitive coupler is also in practice a filter with switched capacitors designed to block signals with frequencies below 5Hz and high-frequency signals (>80kHz) extraneous to the telephone signal (due to the switching of the capacitors of the filters).

The filter 19 is also of the switched capacitor type. It has a transfer function H_t which achieves a flat gain, that is, a uniform gain for all the useful frequencies of the signal to be transmitted, when the speech circuit is matched to the line, that is, when the termination impedance is substantially equal to that of the line.

As explained in the European patent application indicated above, the capacitive coupler 16, the filter 18, the adder 17 and the resistor 11 together constitute a positive feedback loop with a gain of less than 1, which is consequently stable, having the function of creating a complex impedance between the line terminals. This impedance depends upon the resistance R_{dc} of the resistor 11 and upon the transfer function $K_p.H.K_t$. It can be shown that this transfer function is equal to $(Z_{lin} - R_{dc})/Z_{lin}$ if a termination impedance of the speech circuit equal to the line impedance Z_{lin} is to be synthesized.

The subtracter 20 receives as inputs the signal V_{tx} supplied by the transmission generator at the output of the amplifier 14 and the output signal (V_a) of the capacitive coupler 16, which is divided by K_p . This signal contains, superimposed on the signal (V_{lin}) coming from the line, the signal to be transmitted on the line, which is input to the adder 17 by the transmission generator through the filter 19. The subtracter subtracts from this signal the signal (V_{tx}) produced by the transmission

generator and thus outputs only the useful signal (V_{rx}) to be received which is then amplified by the amplifier 15 and applied to the unit 13.

As already stressed, the cancellation of the side tone thus achieved is good as long as the noise generated by the components of the feedback loop, by the filter 19 and by the adder 17 is low, which in practice, is not the case, particularly if switched capacitor filters are used.

The circuit according to the invention which is shown in Figure 2, in which blocks with the same reference numerals as in Figure 1 have the same functions, will now be considered. It can be noted that the structure with the positive feedback loop for synthesizing a complex impedance and the circuit unit with a transfer function independent of frequency, which connects the transmission generator 12, 14 to the line, are unchanged from the known circuit but the structure of the portion of the circuit which performs the function of cancelling out the side tone is substantially different.

For this function, there is an additional block, indicated 21, which is essentially a switched-capacitor filter with a subtracter input stage having its two inputs connected to the terminals of the resistor 11 and its output connected to a subtracter 20'. The subtracter 20' corresponds to the subtracter 20 of Figure 1, but unlike that subtracter, it does not multiply the signal V_a coming from the capacitive coupler 16 by $1/K_p$ but has a gain equal to 1 for that signal.

The transfer function Sc of the filter/subtractor 21 is obtained by the following calculation, in which V_c and V_{lin} are the input signals of the filter and V_b is the output signal:

$$V_b = Sc \cdot (V_c - V_{lin}) \quad (1)$$

If the impedance of the capacitive coupler 16 is considered negligible compared with the line impedance Z_{lin} , which is equal to the termination impedance of the speech circuit when it is matched to the line, it can easily be shown that

$$V_{lin} = \frac{Z_{lin}}{Z_{lin} + R_{dc}} \cdot V_c \quad (2)$$

By substituting (2) into (1), one obtains:

$$V_b = Sc \cdot \left(\frac{Z_{lin} + R_{dc}}{Z_{lin}} - 1 \right) \cdot V_{lin} = Sc \cdot \frac{R_{dc}}{Z_{lin}} \cdot V_{lin} \quad (3)$$

In order to cancel out the side tone the input signals of the subtracter 20', $V_a = K_p \cdot V_{lin}$ and V_b must be equal, that is, (3) must be equal to $K_p \cdot V_{lin}$. Thus:

$$K_p \cdot V_{lin} = Sc \cdot \frac{R_{dc}}{Z_{lin}} \cdot V_{lin}$$

from which:

$$S_c = K_p \cdot \frac{Z_{lin}}{R_{dc}}$$

which is the transfer function sought.

As can be seen, the function of cancelling out the side tone is independent of the parameters which determine the impedance synthesis and therefore of the accuracy with which this synthesis operation is carried out. Moreover, the noise generated by the components upstream of the resistor 11, particularly that due to the filters in the blocks 16, 18 and 19, is attenuated in the same way in which the side tone is attenuated. The only noise which is not cancelled out is that introduced by the capacitive coupler 16 and by the filter/subtractor 21 which, however, is negligible in comparison with the noise which is cancelled out. This result is based on the fact that the phase of the voltage which falls in the resistor 11 is inverted when changing from transmission to reception or vice versa.

It can be shown that the signal coming from the line is not attenuated by the speech circuit according to the invention. In particular, the signal V_{rx} output by the subtracter 20', the transfer function of the subtracter being indicated H_{sotr} , is:

$$V_{rx} = 2 \cdot K_p \cdot H_{sotr} \cdot V_{lin}$$

Thus if one sets $K_p = 1$ and $H_{sotr} = 1$, which values can easily be approximated in practice, the signal coming from the line is amplified by 6 dB as can easily be verified from the equation given above. As a result, the amplification necessary to obtain a useful signal in the unit 13 is less than that which was necessary with the known circuit. This means that the noise output by the subtracter 20' which, as has been seen, is in any case considerably less than that which was at the output of the subtracter 20 of the known circuit, is amplified less.

Finally, it is clear from the foregoing that, as far as the attenuation of noise is concerned, the performance of the circuit according to the invention is decidedly better than that of the known circuit described in the European patent application cited above and is practically the same as that of the known Wheatstone bridge circuit which, from this point of view, is the best which can be achieved and, as regards the processing of the signal received, the circuit according to the invention is more advantageous not only than the circuit described in the European patent application, but also than the Wheatstone bridge circuit. In fact, in this latter circuit, the signal coming from the line is picked up at the terminals of a resistor which has to have a very low resistance (in practice a few tens of ohms) in order not to affect the termination impedance and must therefore be subject to high amplification, whereas, in the circuit according to the invention, the signal coming from the line is picked up on a resistor (R_{dc}) which can have a much higher

resistance (for example 250 ohms) and thus requires only correspondingly lower amplification. This is clearly an advantage for the quality of the useful signal which arrives in the receiving unit since the noise, which is amplified together with the signal received, is also amplified less. In other words, the signal/noise ratio is higher with the circuit according to the invention.

Finally, the variant shown in Figure 3 will be considered. In this circuit, the signal coming from the line to be sent for reception is picked up downstream of the coupler 16. This signal V_a is applied to a first input of a second subtracter, indicated 22, which has a second input connected to the connection point between the output of the adder 17 and the resistor 11. The subtracter 22 has a gain of $1/K_p$ for the first input and a gain of 1 for the second input. The output of the subtracter is connected to the first subtracter 20' by means of a filter 23 which has the same transfer function as the filter/subtractor 21 of the circuit of Figure 2. The second subtracter 22 and the filter 23 are shown inside a rectangle, indicated 21', to indicate that they have a function equivalent to that of the filter/subtractor 21 of the circuit of Figure 2.

It can easily be seen that the output of the second subtracter 22 is $V_c - V_{lin}$ so that the input signal of the first subtracter is again V_b . This variant may be more advantageous because it is easier to process a signal relative to a fixed direct-current point such as the output signal of the capacitive coupler 16 rather than a variable signal such as that at the line terminal $L+$ which, moreover, is at a much higher voltage.

Claims

1. A speech circuit for subscriber telephone apparatus, comprising:

two line terminals ($L+$, $L-$) for connection to a two-wire telephone line,

a signal generator (12, 14) for generating signals for transmission on the line,

a receiver (13, 14) for receiving signals coming from the line,

a circuit for coupling the generator and the receiver to the line, comprising:

- means (16) for detecting the signal coming from the line, connected to the line terminals ($L+$, $L-$) and having an output terminal,
- a resistor (11) connected to the line terminals so that a current substantially equal to the line current passes through it,
- first processing and filtering means (17, 18) which are connected between the output terminal of the detection means (16)

and the resistor (11) and, in combination with the detection means (16) and with the resistor (11), can constitute a positive feedback loop for the formation of a complex termination impedance,

- second processing and filtering means (19, 17) connected between the transmission generator (12, 14) and the resistor (11) for applying the signal to be transmitted to the line, through the resistor (11), and
- a subtracter (20') having a first input connected to the output terminal of the detection means (16) in order to receive a signal (Va) correlated to the signal coming from the line, a second input to which is applied a signal (Vb) correlated to the signal to be transmitted, and an output connected to the receiver (13, 15) of signals coming from the line, the subtracter (20') being able to output a signal representing the difference (Vrx) between the two input signals,

characterized in that it comprises a filter/subtractor (21, 21') having a first input connected to the connection point between the first means (18, 17) and the resistor (11), a second input connected to a point on the path of the signal coming from the line, and an output connected to the second input of the subtracter (20') to supply it with the signal (Vb) correlated to the signal to be transmitted.

2. A speech circuit according to Claim 1, connected to a telephone line, in which, when the termination impedance is equal to the line impedance (Zlin) the following relationships are valid:

$$Kp \cdot H \cdot K = (Zlin - Rdc)/Zlin$$

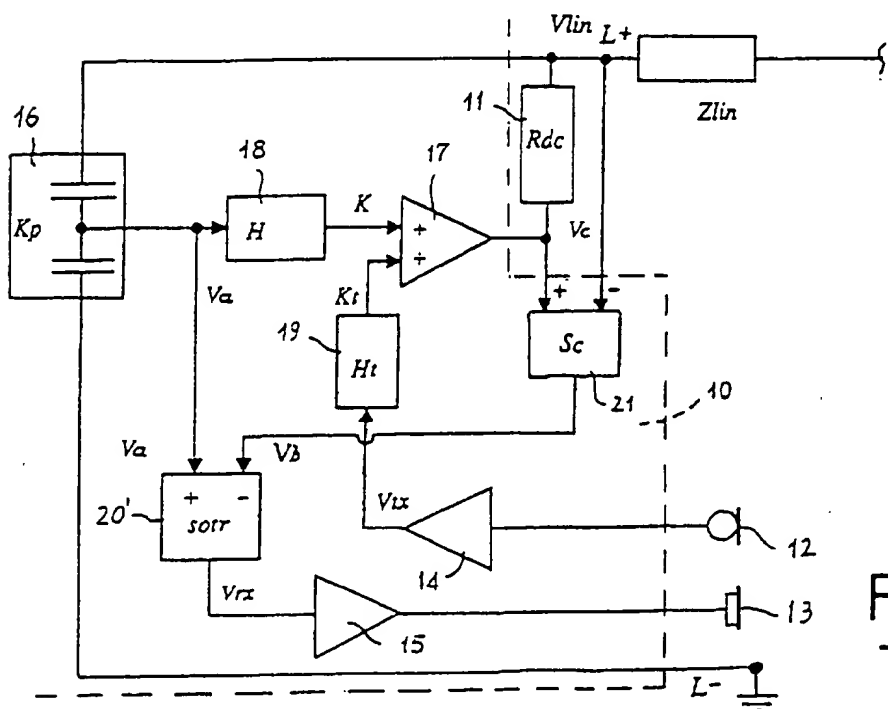
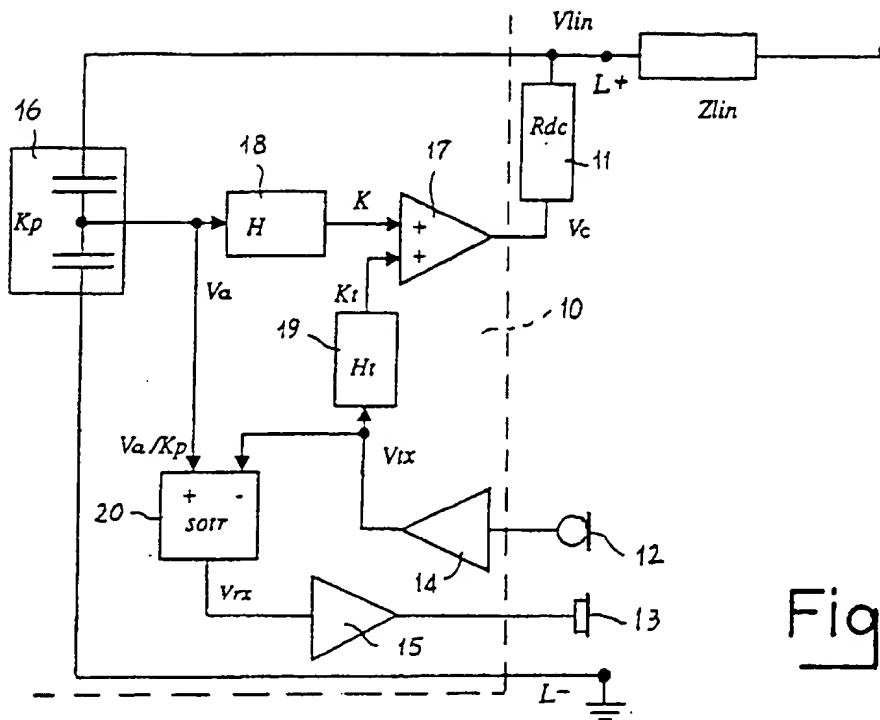
$$Sc = Kp \cdot Zlin/Rdc$$

where Kp represents the transfer function of the means (16) for detecting the signal coming from the line, H.K represents the transfer function of the first processing and filter means (17, 18), Zlin represents the impedance of the telephone line, Rdc represents the resistance of the resistor (11), and Sc represents the transfer function of the second subtracter (21, 21').

3. A speech circuit according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, in which the point on the path of the signal coming from the line is the connection point of the resistor (11) to a line terminal (L+).

4. A speech circuit according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, in which the point on the path of the signal coming from the line is the output terminal of the means (16) for detecting the signal coming from the line.

5. A speech circuit according to Claim 4 in which the filter/subtractor (21') has a gain of 1 for the signal applied to its first input and a gain of 1/Kp for the signal applied to its second input, where Kp is the transfer function of the detection means (16).



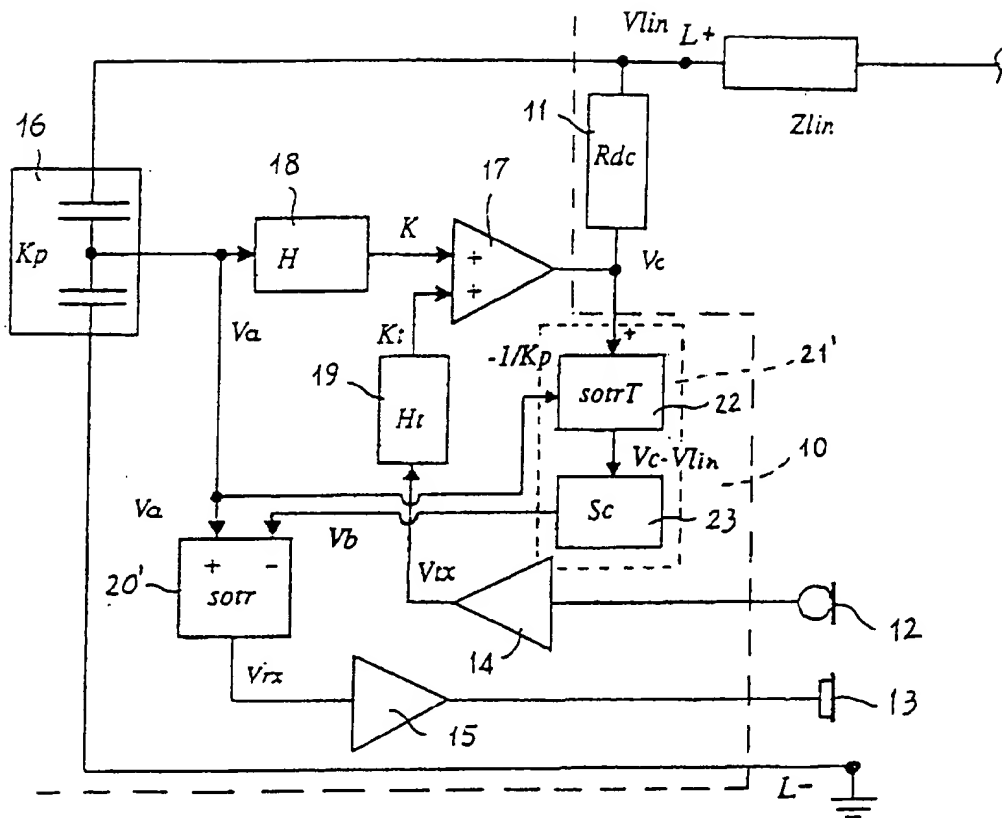


Fig. 3



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 95 83 0138

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (InCL6)
A	IEEE JOURNAL OF SOLID-STATE CIRCUITS, vol. 28, no. 7, July 1993 NEW YORK, pages 770-777, CASTELLO ET AL 'A BiCMOS SPEECH CIRCUIT WITH ONLY TWO EXTERNAL COMPONENTS' * paragraph 1 - paragraph 4; figures 1-6 *	1-4	H04M1/00 H04M1/58 H04M1/76 H04B1/58
A,D	EP-A-0 579 891 (SGS THOMSON MICROELECTRONICS) * column 2, line 35 - column 5, line 34; figures 1,2 *	1-4	
A	EP-A-0 394 012 (NEC CORP.) * column 3, line 14 - column 5, line 22; figures 1-5 *	1-4	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (InCL6)
			H04M H04B
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 5 September 1995	Examiner Delangue, P
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone V : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention F : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application I : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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